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New York

Chairman: Mr. Nkgowe . . . . . (Botswana)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda items 62 to 82 *(continued)*

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Escovar-Salom (Venezuela) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: At the outset I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee at this fifty-second session. With your experience and your diplomatic skills, we are sure that the work of the Committee will be fruitful and successful. You can count on my delegation's full cooperation. I also extend my congratulations to the other officers of the Committee.

In addition, I should like to express my sincere thanks to Ambassador Alyaksandr Sychou, who guided the Committee's work at the fifty-first session with skill and intelligence.

Venezuela, the country I represent, is a country disposed to peace and has always joined its efforts to those of the international community in seeking ways and means of ensuring that the world can be free of the proliferation of all kinds of weapons, from the smallest to the most sophisticated, capable of destroying millions of human beings in a matter of seconds.

That is why my country is party to the Treaty of Tlatelolco and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and why it very enthusiastically signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty which already has 148 signatories — evidence of the interest and desire of the human race to eliminate the nuclear threat once and for all. If a draft resolution promoting the universality of this Treaty is presented, the delegation of Venezuela is very willing to support such an appeal.

Venezuela believes firmly in the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and warmly welcomes the recent initiative by the Republics of Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. We also applaud the political will of Mongolia to become a nuclear-weapon-free zone, and support the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia.

Venezuela considers that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones contributes effectively to reaching the goals of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and general and complete disarmament and, hence, to international peace and security.

At its fiftieth session, the General Assembly reaffirmed the urgent need to reach an early agreement on effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. The Assembly appealed to all States, especially the nuclear-weapon States to work actively towards an early agreement on a common approach and, in particular, a common formula that could be included in an international instrument of a legally binding character. The General Assembly made a similar appeal at its fifty-first session. Accordingly, the delegation of Venezuela is fully ready to support initiatives on this matter.

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My delegation attaches great importance to the question of small arms. The General Assembly has been considering this problem and has stated that it realizes that arms obtained through illicit trafficking are most likely to be used for violent purposes, and that small arms so obtained, directly or indirectly, by terrorist groups, drug traffickers or underground organizations can pose a threat to regional and international security and, certainly, to the security and political stability of the countries affected. Venezuela is following this phenomenon with great interest and is willing to support the draft resolution on this item.

With regard to measures to curb the illicit transfer and use of conventional weapons, we note with concern that at its most recent session the Disarmament Commission, when dealing with the agenda item on "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N", was not able to arrive at a definitive agreement. During consideration of this item in the First Committee, my delegation could support the draft resolution that has been submitted.

Venezuela attaches paramount importance to regional disarmament. In recent years, various initiatives have been taken at the regional level, in an effort to help strengthen international peace and security by organizing meetings and through other mechanisms to promote positive measures such as the Conference on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures held in Argentina in 1994 and Chile in 1995. We have also held meetings of ministers of defence of the hemisphere, one in Virginia in the United States of America and another in Bariloche, Argentina, in 1996.

To these meetings, should be added the talks between the Rio Group and the European Union on confidence-building measures held in São Paulo, Brazil, the programme on demining in Central America sponsored by the Special Committee on Hemispheric Security of the Organization of American States, and other initiatives.

Accordingly, the delegation of Venezuela will support the draft resolution on this item.

On the question of nuclear disarmament, the General Assembly has called upon the nuclear-weapon States to undertake the step-by-step reduction of the nuclear threat and a phased programme of progressive and balanced reductions of nuclear weapons. In this context, the Group of 21 in Geneva introduced a proposal designed to respond to this aspiration of the international community.

This aspiration, dear to the international community, recalls the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons and the obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control, in accordance with the terms of article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Venezuela believes that the nuclear powers should take significant steps in this direction.

We should also remember that since the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, this matter has become increasingly relevant, because the international community's next step should be to ensure that nuclear-weapon States commit themselves to a nuclear disarmament programme.

My country attaches the utmost importance to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. This is why we welcome the Convention's entry into force in April this year. I should also mention that Venezuela is currently working swiftly towards ratification, which we hope will come very shortly.

Venezuela took part in the last meetings organized in the context of the so-called Ottawa process in Brussels and Oslo, whose ultimate goal was the signing of an international agreement prohibiting all use of anti-personnel mines. The Oslo Conference approved the draft Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines, which we believe is of the utmost importance because of its deeply humanitarian content.

My country regrets that it was unable to go along with the States that made it possible for the Convention to be approved in Oslo for reasons that were explained well enough at the time. In any event, I would like to make it clear that my country is open to dialogue on this matter and hopes that the issue will also be considered in the framework of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. Nevertheless, Venezuela is more than willing to support initiatives put forward in the First Committee.

With regard to the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, my delegation believes that consideration should be given to the cost of holding a conference on that scale and to whether the conditions are right for a thorough review of the issue of disarmament and international security. In any event, Venezuela notes that this decision should not be

forced through and the special session should be convened on the basis of universal consensus.

Furthermore, Venezuela notes with concern that the question of the rationalization of the work and reform of the agenda of the First Committee has still not been successfully completed. We trust that this issue can be brought to a conclusion for the good of the Committee. On this matter, my delegation will support the draft resolution submitted.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I am pleased, on behalf of the United Arab Emirates, to extend to you, Sir, our congratulations on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. We wish you and the other members of the Bureau every success.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our thanks and appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Sychou, for his wise leadership of this Committee in the course of the past session.

Matters of enhancing international peace and security as well as disarmament, with particular regard to weapons of mass destruction and nuclear weapons, occupy the full attention of the international community. Our expectations, in the wake of the cold war, for the establishment of international peace and security and social and economic prosperity for humanity have not yet been fulfilled, because of continued civil and regional wars. These wars have resulted in an imbalance in the nature of international relations and have also directly threatened regional and international peace and security.

Our scrutiny of the questions relating to peace and security on the agenda of the Security Council, the General Assembly and other regional conferences, and of the efforts of the United Nations in this field, in addition to our objective reading of the official and unofficial statistics compiled by research and specialized studies centres and world mass media, indicates that hotbeds of tension have flared up with increased frequency as a result of armament in different parts of the world. This has led to increasing the scope of human suffering related to genocide, the destruction of development infrastructure, displacement and ethnic cleansing. All of these factors were reflected in the creation of security, social and economic problems. These were further compounded by growing hunger, sickness, unemployment, illiteracy, the eruption of violence and terrorism, illicit drug and arms trafficking, environmental degradation, and continued violations of human rights which gravely imperil our common future.

Despite all of this, the current international climate derives from the lack of the requisite political will on the part of some States with respect to stopping the arms race in all its forms, in accordance with the principles of equality as well as respect for the sovereignty of States and non-interference in their internal affairs. Yet, in the interest of humanity and its happiness, we accord priority to our efforts to enhance constructive and joint dialogue in order to redress the imbalances in matters of security and the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons.

At the same time, we wish to reiterate that we cannot redress these problems successfully at the regional and international levels unless we take an approach and adopt mechanisms based on cooperation, solidarity, tolerance, mutual respect and the primacy of international law.

Here, we wish to support the position of the Non-Aligned Movement at the Conference on Disarmament, calling for the establishment of a special Committee on Disarmament and the implementation of step-by-step programmes to eliminate nuclear weapons within a specific time-frame.

We wish to express our support for the preparations for the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, as well as the endeavours designed to bring about the success of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons with a view to attaining the purposes set forth in the preamble and provisions of that Treaty. Nuclear States should be made to give more effective guarantees to non-nuclear States that they will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against them.

The United Arab Emirates believes that the maintenance of regional and international peace and security necessitates taking practical and objective measures to control arms and to effect disarmament. Therefore we would like to reaffirm the commitment to abide by the principles of peaceful coexistence, confidence-building, good-neighbourly relations and the settlement of disputes by peaceful means, through negotiations, in accordance with the principles of the Charter and the provisions of international law. This will provide an appropriate climate enabling States to channel their natural resources towards comprehensive social and economic plans.

The international community should not be deceived by the declared policies of some States in respect of their support for peace and security and for disarmament in their

regions, while at the same time they are intent on accumulating prohibited weapons, indifferent to the grave threat this poses to international peace and security, as well as the direct threat to the safety of humanity and of the environment and to comprehensive development plans.

Political events prove that peace and security cannot be achieved through the use or the threat of force, or through the balance of military forces. Peace is based on partnership, cooperation, confidence-building measures and peaceful settlement of disputes in conformity with international norms and provisions. This is our aspiration as well as that of the international community.

The State of the United Arab Emirates, which has pursued a policy of cooperation and confidence based on impartial balance in its bilateral, international and regional relations, is keen on fostering these policies. This has been made manifest during the last two years when we hastened to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). Thus it has participated in international efforts to enhance the principle of globalization of these treaties relating to disarmament. We have also declared on many occasions our satisfaction with international initiatives designed to continue efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament as a priority matter of international concern.

Furthermore, we have supported arrangements relating to the transparency of biological and chemical armaments as well as other relevant areas. We also support dialogue and peaceful settlement in treating regional tensions to avert wars and their concomitant grave impacts on international peace and security. Convinced of the need for interdependence of international peace, the United Arab Emirates was among the States that welcomed the protocols on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in South-East Asia, Africa and the South Pacific. Along with the Group of Arab States, we are hoping to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

This requires the international community to call upon Israel, the only State in the region that possesses nuclear weapons, to take practical and immediate steps to accede to the NPT and to subject its nuclear activities and facilities to the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency. We are also of the view that Israel's acquisition of nuclear weapons outside international control is testament to a challenge to the will of the international community, which yearns for peace, security and stability in the region.

The delegation of the United Arab Emirates backs the position of the Arab States and the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement calling for fostering the transparency of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms while taking into consideration the political, security and military concerns and particularities of each region, in conformity with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.

We share the concern of the international community, given the continued gravity of the human, social, economic and environmental deterioration and tensions created as a result of the use of anti-personnel landmines. These landmines imperil the lives of millions of innocent people, men, women, children and the elderly alike, both during wars and after peace is established. Therefore, we share the unanimous call for a comprehensive world ban on those indiscriminate weapons. We also regard the Convention on the Prohibition of Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, which is envisaged to be open for accession by States at Ottawa, Canada, next December as an important step complementing the efforts towards achieving international disarmament.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to register its support for the position of the Group of 77 and China and the States members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries with regard to disarmament, as set forth in the Secretary-General's report [A/51/950] on the reform of the Organization. We hope that his proposals will take into account the special political situation of each region and the right of each State to enhance its strategic security as well as provide guarantees to non-nuclear-weapon States and States not possessing other weapons of mass destruction against threats from States which possess such weapons: this would constitute a step towards entrenching the bases of a world free from all types of armaments, a world committed to world values and principles of tolerance, democracy and respect for the human right to life and dignity.

The Chairman: I now call upon the representative of Japan, Chairman of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms.

Mr. Donowaki (Japan), Chairman of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms: I am grateful to you, Mr. Chairman, for giving me this opportunity to speak in my capacity as Chairman of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, which was established by the Secretary-General in April of last year, pursuant to resolution 50/70 B of 12 December 1995, to

assist him in preparing a report on small arms and light weapons. The report, which was unanimously adopted by the Panel in July this year, has now been submitted by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at this session as document A/52/298.

First of all, I should like to express my sincere appreciation to all the members of the Panel, who were nominated by the Secretary-General on the basis of equitable geographical representation, for their exemplary hard work and dedication in fulfilling the mandates entrusted to it. Naturally, my appreciation goes also to the secretariat, including the Panel's Secretary and consultant, for supporting the diverse activities of the Panel and facilitating the carrying out of its tasks.

Small arms and light weapons are now increasingly being used as the primary instruments of violence in the conflicts dealt with by the United Nations, almost all of which have in recent years been internal conflicts, causing large numbers of deaths and displacement of citizens. Even in regions where such conflicts have ended, the easy availability of such weapons is causing an alarming rise in criminal activities, seriously hampering the social, economic and political reorientation of the nations involved.

In all such regions of conflict dealt with by the United Nations, the question of how to prevent and reduce the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons is today a matter of the highest priority. Indeed, it is one of the most serious challenges confronting the international community. In addition, it is a new challenge, in the sense that not much attention has been paid to it in the past, while a number of significant initiatives have been taken in the past several years in the fields of weapons of mass destruction and larger conventional weapons.

At the same time, the intractable nature of this new challenge must be recognized, for small arms and light weapons are types of weapons that are relatively easy to produce and obtain and are handy to use, maintain and transport for combatants engaged in civil conflicts, and even, for that matter, for any individuals, including criminals. Therefore, they are the types of weapons that are hard to place under effective governmental controls, even in developed countries. As a result, they are weapons that are prone to be traded in an illicit or clandestine manner. Owing to those characteristics, the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of such weapons in regions of conflict is, unfortunately, an accomplished fact that has already taken place.

It was against such a background that the Panel was requested to prepare a report, first, on the types of such weapons actually being used in conflicts dealt with by the United Nations; secondly, on the nature and causes of the excessive and destabilizing accumulation and transfer of such weapons, including their illicit production and trade; and, thirdly, on the ways and means to prevent and reduce such accumulation and transfer. Those are subjects on which few studies have been made in the past by the United Nations or even by research communities, although the United Nations has recently made some excellent studies and conducted deliberations on the question of the illicit transfer of conventional weapons in general.

What the Panel on Small Arms was asked was to undertake pioneering work, breaking entirely new ground. Accordingly, what it was able to achieve within its limited time and resources may be no more than a modest first step forward. However, I should like to report that the Panel exerted its utmost efforts to come up with a report which, I am convinced, represents the best available wisdom of our times. In preparing its report, the Panel took into account not only the views and proposals submitted by Member States to the Secretary-General in response to resolution 50/70 B, but also a wide range of other relevant information and materials collected by the secretariat.

In addition, between its official sessions the Panel held three regional workshops to receive direct input from the regions of the world most affected by the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons. Those regional workshops were financed by voluntary contributions from the Governments of some of the members of the Panel. In all three workshops, pertinent and sobering appeals from regional participants were submitted to the Panel, and they are attached as appendices to the Panel's report.

Furthermore, during the course of its three official sessions and three regional workshops the Panel heard presentations from some six dozen scholars, experts and other invitees. The Panel was particularly grateful for the briefing it received from Mr. James Hayes, the Chairman of the Expert Group on Firearms Regulation of the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, since the Panel, while eager to learn about the work being carried out by other United Nations bodies, wanted at the same time to avoid duplication of work as far as possible.

With regard to the contents of the Panel's report, I do not intend to dwell on details, because many delegations

must have been studying it, in view of its importance. Today, I should like to present my own views as Chairman of the Panel on the structure and thrust of the report's recommendations.

In accordance with resolution 50/70 B, the Panel was asked to prepare a report on

> "the ways and means to prevent and reduce the excessive and destabilizing accumulation and transfer of small arms and light weapons ... with particular attention to the role of the United Nations in this field and to the complementary role of regional organizations". [resolution 50/70 B, para. 1 (c)]

Therefore, the concluding part of the report of the Small Arms Panel consists of two sets of recommendations. The recommendations listed in paragraph 79 are mostly measures that may have to be taken in order to reduce the excessive and destabilizing accumulation and transfer of small arms and light weapons in specific regions of the world where such accumulation and transfer have already taken place. The recommendations in paragraph 80 are mostly the measures that may have to be taken in order to prevent such accumulation and transfer from occurring in the future.

Of course, the Panel members were aware that the distinction between "reduction" and "prevention" cannot always be neat and clear-cut. For example, the measures to demobilize former combatants in a region where a conflict has come to an end may be for the purpose of reduction, but at the same time can serve for the purpose of preventing the recurrence of the situation. Also, the measures for curbing the illicit trafficking of such weapons may be for the purpose of prevention, but at the same time can serve for the purpose of reduction, particularly in the regions of ongoing or recent conflicts. However, the Panel found it convenient to group together one set of recommendations under the heading of "reduction" and another set of recommendations under the heading of "prevention".

The measures for reduction, by their very nature, require immediate attention because they are related to some specific regions of the world where conflicts dealt with by the United Nations are taking place or have taken place and where the excessive and destabilizing accumulation and transfer are already a reality, causing deaths, displacement, a rise in criminality and so forth. On the other hand, measures for prevention, by their nature, require the concerted efforts of all nations looking to the future, because the weapons in question are being produced, held in stockpiles, used and traded on a global scale not limited to any specific regions.

Also, it was pointed out by some members of the Panel that measures for reduction should not make a distinction between the small arms and light weapons manufactured to military specifications and those not manufactured to military specifications, because the reduction of all the small arms and light weapons causing trouble should be the question to be addressed. On the other hand, it was generally assumed by the Panel members that the measures for prevention should be applied primarily to the small arms and light weapons manufactured to military specifications, because in this case the question has to be addressed on a global basis and because the issue of civilian firearms regulation is currently being taken up by the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

On the specific recommendations under the heading of reduction, I should like to stress the importance of mobilizing the all-out efforts of the donor nations in order to reduce the excessive and destabilizing accumulation and transfer of such weapons. Of course, the nations involved in these regions should do all they can do first, and in some instances very encouraging achievements are being made. The recommendations contained in paragraphs 79 (g) and 80 (d) are indeed meant for those nations.

However, we are all aware that the task is too great for them to do by themselves alone. People living in these regions would not easily turn in their weapons unless their security is adequately guaranteed by their Governments. Most of the Governments in these regions badly need well-trained police and customs and border-control officials, as well as equipment for carrying out their functions. Furthermore, the establishment of adequate internal security requires a society with fair opportunities for jobs, economic development, social and political justice and so forth.

It was for these reasons that the Panel found the new approach initiated by the United Nations in Mali and surrounding West African nations to be of significant importance, as is indicated in paragraph 79 (a). The so-called

> "proportional and integrated approach to security and development, including the identification of appropriate assistance for the internal security forces" [*ibid.*, para. 79 (a)]

was first recommended in the Secretary-General's Sahara-Sahel advisory mission report of 1995. During the course of last year, based on this recommendation, the Department of Political Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) started to coordinate their efforts, obtained the cooperation of some of the donor nations, including Japan, endorsed this new approach and are now implementing it.

This new approach initiated by the United Nations with respect to Mali and surrounding West African nations, according to the unanimous view of the members of the Small Arms Panel, not only should be the right and correct approach, but also should be pursued vigorously by arousing the greater awareness of the international community as a whole, including the donor community. Moreover, this new approach should be applied to all other regions of the world where the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons is causing real and serious problems.

In this connection, it is encouraging to note that the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) established a special Task Force on Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation in 1995 and has been formulating DAC Guidelines on Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation since 1996. Thus, the momentum is already emerging, but how to turn it into a major, decisive action may be a task that the international community as a whole has to come to grips with and decide.

The recommendation contained in paragraph 79 (b) is basically along the same line of thought, as I just explained. What the Panel had in mind, in particular, was some of the weapons turn-in initiatives taken locally in some specific regions of the world, with significant success. Ways should be found to make the donor nations aware of such encouraging initiatives so that adequate financial and other support will be channelled to them.

Paragraph 79 (c) is based on the "Call upon Afghanistan" submitted to the Panel by the participants in the regional workshop held in Kathmandu in May this year. The Panel was particularly appreciative of the participation in and contribution to the workshop by Mr. Jasjit Singh, the Director of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi, of India; and by Mr. Naiz A. Niak, Secretary General of the Pakistan Security and Development Association, Islamabad, and former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan.

In coming up with the recommendations contained in paragraph 79 (d), the Panel benefited greatly from the presence of a Canadian expert among its members and through him received valuable inputs from the Canadian Government based on its extensive past experiences and lessons learnt in connection with the peacekeeping operations of the United Nations.

Paragraphs 79 (e) and 80 (g) and (h) represent the realization of the Panel that there is a need for much more intensified, closer cooperation among police, security and customs officials and related regional and international organizations, on a regional as well as global basis, in order to both reduce and prevent the problems related to small arms and light weapons.

Paragraph 79 (f) represents the finding of the Panel on the question of the so-called "regional register" of arms. Unlike the seven categories of larger conventional weapons covered by the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, what is needed of the small arms and light weapons already proliferating in the regions of past and ongoing conflicts is their immediate reduction. Also, unlike larger conventional weapons, they are hard to account for, particularly in the regions of such conflicts. Therefore, the concept of a regional register may well be pursued through the establishment of regional networks for information-sharing among regional Governments and authorities.

As I stated earlier, the recommendations of the Panel for preventive purposes are slightly different from those for reduction purposes, because the production, stockpiling, trading and transfers of such weapons have to be dealt with more or less on a global basis. As far as their illicit trade is concerned, the Panel found the 1991 report of the Group of Experts on the Study on Ways and Means of Promoting Transparency in International Transfers of Conventional Arms (A/46/301) and the guidelines for international arms transfers in the context of General Assembly resolution 46/36 H of 6 December 1991 — adopted last year by the Disarmament Commission — to be of great relevance.

The Panel found the definition of the illicit arms trade made in the 1991 report and the 1996 Disarmament Commission guidelines hard to revise or improve upon, although the definition in both documents apply not only to small arms but also to conventional arms in general. The Panel also found a need to re-emphasize the recommendations to Member States contained in both

documents. Subparagraphs (a) to (c) of paragraph 80 are the result of such thinking by the Panel.

The recommendations contained in paragraphs (e) and (f) of paragraph 80 represent the unique findings of the Panel about the disposal of the surplus of such weapons, as well as the safeguarding of such weapons against loss through theft and corruption. Member States are recommended to take appropriate measures. Although the Panel did not go so far in its recommendations, some sort of concerted efforts instead of individual efforts might deserve consideration.

Subparagraph (i) was included because the Panel was aware of the initiative taken by the President of Mali for the establishment among West African nations of a moratorium on the import, export and manufacture of light weapons.

Subparagraph (j) hardly requires an explanation, in view of the important initiative now being taken by the Organization of American States (OAS) for the conclusion of a convention.

In subparagraph (k) the Panel decided to recommend the United Nations to consider the possibility of an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects. It may be recalled that the 1991 Group of Experts recommended that,

> "The United Nations has a role to play in combating illicit arms trade: to facilitate the holding of meetings and seminars at the national, regional and international levels in an appropriate manner with a view to increasing awareness of the destructive and destabilizing effects of the illicit arms trade and to increase the understanding of other countries' procedures in order to facilitate cooperation. *[A/46/301, para. 165]*"

As one of such efforts undertaken by the United Nations, the 1996 Disarmament Commission guidelines were adopted, although they do not have legally binding force. On a regional basis, the OAS is already considering the possibility of a hemispheric, legally-binding convention. It may still be premature to consider an international conference for the purpose of concluding a universal convention on the illicit arms trade, but it may be high time to hold an international conference in order to keep up the momentum that already exists and in order to sort out issues by considering all the aspects of the illicit arms trade. On this question, many members of the Small Arms Panel felt that the views of Member States might be sought first, before deciding on whether or not to have such a conference.

In subparagraphs (l) and (m) three rather important specific studies are recommended to be initiated by the United Nations.

The first study, on a reliable system of marking weapons, might well address the question of the feasibility of a computerized ballistic fingerprinting system of all the small arms and light weapons manufactured to military specifications.

The second study, on a database of authorized manufacturers and dealers in small arms and light weapons, is based on the realization that by defining the boundaries of legal trading in such arms the room for illicit trafficking should become considerably narrower. While in some Member States the manufacture of and trading in such arms are fairly strictly controlled through licensing and other mechanisms, this is not always the case in others, thus leaving enough room for illicit traffickers to carry out their activities. The cooperation of all Member States would be needed eventually, but an initial attempt might be made by establishing a database with available information. The feasibility of any meaningful efforts in this direction will certainly deserve a study by qualified experts.

The third study, on the problems of ammunition and explosives, requires special attention. It is known that the mass production of modern, reliable and effective ammunition requires highly developed and precise industrial tools. If ways and means to control the supply of such ammunition are found, the dangers of small arms and ammunition may be substantially reduced and prevented. Also, violence perpetrated through improvised explosive devices has recently exacerbated conflicts and caused severe destruction and death. Early coming into force of the Convention on the Marking of Plastic Explosives for the Purpose of Detection is awaited. Are there any other ways to restrict the availability of dangerous explosives? Certainly, these problems of ammunition and explosives in all their aspects deserve study by competent experts.

In concluding my statement as the Chairman of the Small Arms Panel, I wish to reiterate the importance and urgent nature of the problems of small arms and light weapons. I am convinced that the Panel's report, although it may be just a modest first step forward, represents the best wisdom available today. Therefore, it is my earnest

wish that the Committee consider the report carefully and take appropriate actions.

Ms. Laose (Nigeria): The Nigerian delegation is particularly delighted to see you, Sir, at the helm of the affairs of the First Committee during the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. We repose confidence in your ability and seize the opportunity also to pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Sychou of Belarus.

Against the backdrop of the ever present and pervading nuclear threat, international relations have continued to experience a certain restiveness and consuming unease. It would be a signpost of their concrete contribution to world peace and security if the militarily significant States in general and the nuclear-weapon States in particular accepted the necessity of nuclear disarmament and pursued it. But, as we know, they have usually put forward countervailing circumstances, the demands of strategic calculations, notions of debatable military doctrines or concerns for national security as reasons why they continue to retain, refine and stockpile weapons they clearly do not intend to use. Resources that should be expended on providing a better life for present and future generations are being wasted on war machines and on vain efforts to acquire elusive military security on an individual national basis, instead of reliance on and pursuit of collective security.

No nation, however well militarily equipped, can really consider itself safe and secure when it is surrounded by a world plagued by poverty and deprivation. The maintenance of international security should therefore be seen as a prerequisite for the achievement of national security. In the circumstances, every State should consider the maintenance of international peace and security as a collective responsibility.

For as long as nuclear weapons exist, the threat of nuclear annihilation will be real. It is imperative, therefore, that we do not lose sight of the objective of their total elimination. International public opinion attests to the fact that a nuclear-weapon-free world is the highest investment in the construction of peace and the pursuit of development, and that at this time conditions are favourable for the start of real negotiations on nuclear disarmament. We note the progress, albeit slow, in bilateral agreements on the reduction of nuclear weapons. Other developments in the field — such as movement towards the establishment of more nuclear-weapon-free zones, the conclusion of a ban on nuclear testing and the near universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) — all head in the right direction, but they do not in themselves hold out the hope or promise of a nuclear-free world. They are solid foundations upon which we must build. The overwhelming majority of Member States of our Organization, together with the peoples of the world, whom we represent, expect this much. Nuclear-weapon States must be responsive to this aspiration and assume their responsibility in full.

It is widely accepted that the United Nations has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. To play that role effectively and achieve the desired objective, the United Nations relies to a large extent on regional and subregional organizations. Article 52 of the United Nations Charter provides for this. The General Assembly has adopted resolutions and recommended guidelines for regional arrangements to maintain regional peace and security as well as to build confidence among States. The current international security situation requires the United Nations to assume its proper role and to render all necessary cooperation and assistance to existing regional or subregional organizations to better perform the task of maintaining peace through agreed ways and means.

When a region is seen and put in its proper perspective, that region is better able to handle its security problems to the benefit of global peace. The experience of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the West African subregion is a demonstrable example of how genuine intentions and collaborative efforts in crisis management on the part of States of a subregion can contribute to conflict resolution. The Nigerian Government is indeed delighted to be associated with the successful experiment in Liberia, where, in spite of their very limited resources, member States of ECOWAS resolutely brought a seven-year conflict to an end. As we have all come to accept, a threat to peace anywhere is a threat to peace everywhere. It was this philosophy that informed the ECOWAS endeavour in Liberia. It is currently informing the subregional organization in the pursuit of its initiatives in Sierra Leone, where it is seeking through peaceful means to reinstate the democratically elected Government, which was ousted in a military *coup d'état*.

The fallout of the Liberian conflict has helped to underscore the symbiotic relationship between peace and security on the one hand and development on the other. It is this realization that has helped to reinforce the determination of ECOWAS leaders to resolve crisis situations in their region in order to ensure that ECOWAS,

which was established to further regional economic integration and promote the socio-economic development of the people of West Africa, can concentrate all its energies and resources to achieve that objective.

In April 1997 we began the new review process of the NPT. The process may be new, but the old attitudes seem to persist. The legitimate request of non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT are still being denied. For example, a binding international agreement or instrument on negative security assurances for NPT parties is considered by some nuclear-weapon States as impossible at this time, almost three decades after it should have been concluded. Important parties to the Treaty still give their own interpretation to articles of the Treaty in order to violate the Treaty with impunity. The ability of the Treaty to stop vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons is still in doubt. These are real issues that all States parties must confront and seek to settle through the new, strengthened review process.

The Nigerian delegation welcomes the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Nigeria signed the Treaty at its opening in Paris in January 1993. The legal process for the country's ratification of it has already been set in motion. My delegation is encouraged by the action of major chemical-weapon States in favour of this treaty. We shall continue to work from within to ensure that all the provisions of the Convention are properly applied to the benefit of all States.

We note the progress that has been made in the efforts to strengthen the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. We hope that these efforts will achieve the desired objective of strengthening the Convention.

Conventional weapons are the only means by which many countries defend themselves. They are also the weapons that inflict death in the millions and pain and human suffering on a daily basis all over the globe. The issue of the control of conventional weapons calls for international action.

Calling for control of conventional weapons on the one hand and pursuing an aggressive arms-sales policy on the other is a disservice to the cause of peace and a negation of the principle of honesty of intent on the part of arms-exporting countries. Using arms sales to pursue political strategies cannot but promote instability, especially in developing countries, as well as encourage insurgency and the illicit arms trade. One need not wonder, then, why almost every effort to deal with conventional weapons has hitherto been unsuccessful. The fact is, these efforts have more often than not been insincere, discriminatory and, at best, double-talk. We must address conventional arms control comprehensively and in acceptable multilateral settings, but must not supplant or replace the priority accorded to nuclear disarmament.

The Nigerian delegation notes the proposal for reform by the Secretary-General as it relates to disarmament. We welcome the clarifications he made in his note in document A/52/CRP.3 of 14 October 1997. We are happy with the reaffirmation of the link between peace, security and disarmament. The recent call to pay more attention to conventional disarmament should not be interpreted as an invitation to derogate or detract from the obligation of nuclear-weapon States to commit themselves to nuclear disarmament. We fully endorse the statement in that document that nuclear disarmament must be pursued more vigorously, particularly by the nuclear-weapon States, with a view to the progressive reduction and complete elimination of such weapons.

With regard to the Secretary-General's proposal to upgrade the Centre for Disarmament Affairs into a Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation, it is the view of my delegation that any change that strengthens the United Nations ability to perform its role in the field is welcome. The upgrading of the New York office must, however, not reduce the importance of the Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament, which is the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, nor distort the priority accorded to nuclear disarmament. Reforms in the disarmament machinery should also improve the work of the Disarmament Commission and the First Committee, where all Member States have the opportunity to deliberate and exchange views on disarmament questions. It is our collective responsibility to pursue disarmament in the interest of peace, security and development.

Mr. Goonetilleke (Sri Lanka), President of the Conference on Disarmament: I am speaking today in my capacity as President of the Conference on Disarmament in order to present to the First Committee the report (A/52/27) of the Conference on its work during the 1997 session.

As can be seen from the report, this year's session of the Conference on Disarmament was not the most productive in terms of the substantive consideration of its agenda items. Despite intensive efforts aimed at developing a consensus on how to address the items on the agenda, the Conference was not in a position to establish ad hoc

committees or other mechanisms on any one of these items. This was mainly due to the persistence of political divergences among its membership on the priorities to be accorded to the issues under consideration. However, this does not mean that the Conference did not make attempts to overcome these difficulties.

Throughout the session, intensive consultations, both formal and informal, were held under the authority of the successive Presidents with a view to clarifying positions and developing a minimum common ground which would allow the Conference to discharge its mandate as the sole multilateral negotiating forum of the international community in the field of disarmament. In this process, a number of documents were submitted by individual delegations and groups of delegations on specific agenda items. Those documents are listed in the report.

In a sense, the 1997 session could be characterized as a year of pause and reflection on the specific tasks to be undertaken by the Conference following the end of the cold war, the conclusion of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Admittedly, the Conference on Disarmament cannot be expected to produce a global treaty on arms regulation and disarmament every few years, and it is acknowledged that all major negotiations are always preceded by a pre-negotiating stage aimed at reaching an understanding among all the participants on the issues to be addressed and the basic parameters of the instrument to be negotiated. This process also involves the necessary harmonization of views, taking into consideration the security concerns of all.

In the course of its work this year, the Conference decided to appoint four Special Coordinators — on anti-personnel landmines, the review of the agenda, the expansion of its membership, and its improved and effective functioning — who, after consultations, presented their reports to the Conference. A ban on anti-personnel landmines was widely addressed during the session. It was generally accepted that the conclusion of the Ottawa process in December would allow the Conference to decide its role on anti-personnel landmines, if any. Another subject which received the attention of the Conference was nuclear disarmament. However, no consensus was possible on that subject either.

The consultations on the review of the agenda, although not conclusive, helped clarify the positions held by delegations and groups of delegations on their priorities in the post-cold-war disarmament agenda. Although consensus on such an agenda is still elusive, there was nevertheless a shared determination to elaborate a forward-looking and balanced agenda which would recognize the security concerns of all.

The consultations on a further expansion of the membership of the Conference revealed that the importance of this issue is recognized by its members in conformity with the rules of procedure, which provide for periodic reviews of its membership. In this regard, some delegations emphasized the need to preserve the negotiating character of the Conference and to ensure that it represents the international community in a balanced manner.

The Conference also devoted attention to the improvement of its procedures and working methods with a view to allowing it to respond to the new challenges facing it, taking into account the experience accumulated over the years.

In accordance with paragraph 54 of the report before the Committee, I intend, together with the incoming President of the Conference, to use the inter-sessional period in order to facilitate substantive progress during the 1998 session of the Conference by holding consultations with the membership, with a view to preparing the ground for the smooth and expeditious start of the 1998 session. Our task in this regard will be a difficult one, but I feel encouraged by the willingness expressed during the final stages of the 1997 session to start early in 1998 substantive work on some issues, while our efforts will continue on the development of a comprehensive programme of work for the Conference. The determination expressed by all to make full use of the potential of the Conference on Disarmament as an institution to further our common objectives augurs well for a productive 1998 session.

It remains for me only to express my deep gratitude to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, to the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, and to their small team of dedicated staff for their continued valuable support and assistance to the Conference.

Mr. Calovski (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia): I should like to extend to you, Sir, my delegation's congratulations on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. You can count on our full support and cooperation. Also, I should like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election to their high posts.

This year the First Committee will deliberate on all aspects of international security and disarmament. It will adopt many resolutions, as it has in the past. We hope, therefore, that the results of our deliberations will represent an important contribution to the efforts of the United Nations to strengthen international peace and security and to further the process of disarmament and arms control. The positions of the delegation of the Republic of Macedonia on various issues before the Committee are identical with those contained in the statement of the representative of Luxembourg, who spoke on behalf of the European Union and associated countries.

The improvement in the international security situation since our deliberations last year is important and has been noted in our general debate, but there remains a great deal of concern at the difficult situation in many parts of the world. This is particularly true for my country's region — the Balkans — and, of course, for other parts of the world. It is true that during this period many efforts were undertaken with the aim of improving the security situation worldwide, including in the Balkans.

It has been emphasized time and again that there is no alternative to the full implementation of the Dayton Agreement for Bosnia and Herzegovina and to the development of good-neighbourly relations among the Balkan States.

Of particular importance were: the engagement and the activities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Albania; the leading role of Italy in the success story of Operation Alba; the successful continuation of the process of bolstering stability and good-neighbourliness in southeastern Europe — the so-called Royaumont Initiative — and of the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative; and the various activities of the Central European Initiative, to give but a few examples.

Special mention should be made of the successful continuation of the inter-Balkan process initiated by the Sofia Declaration of 1996 and further enhanced by the Thessaloniki Declaration of 1997 on good-neighbourly relations, stability, security and cooperation in the Balkans. My country took an active part in all these activities, and has made its contribution within the framework of its possibilities. The starting point of my country's efforts continues to be the prevention of new conflicts in the Balkans — of which we have had more than enough this century; the development of good-neighbourly relations; the sustainable economic development of the region; the strengthening of democracy and the rule of law; acceptance of reality and the observance of the international law; and the Europeanization of the region. An important contribution to the goal of a Balkans without conflicts is the presence of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) on our northwestern border. The success story of UNPREDEP is a manifestation of preventive diplomacy in action. The statement of the Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organization, in section D, on preventive diplomacy, is very relevant in this regard:

> "The assurance that members will not resort to violence but will settle their disputes in some other way is the cornerstone of all well-ordered societies." [A/52/1, para. 78]

So it is very important that the efforts of the international community in the Balkans should continue in that direction.

With the aim of contributing to the improvement of the general situation in the Balkans, and of the security situation in particular, my delegation will propose the traditional draft resolution on development of good-neighbourly relations among Balkan States. We have informally circulated the draft text to the members of the Committee for their prior information and possible suggestions for improvements, which we would welcome very much. We expect the draft resolution to be sponsored by many delegations and adopted by consensus, without a vote. The proposed draft resolution, in its preambular part, will note the present situation in the region and, in its operative part, will point out the important matters to be addressed so that by the year 2000, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 48/84 B, the Balkans will become a stable zone of peace and cooperation.

My delegation is traditionally very much in favour of all activities aimed at furthering the process of disarmament. We see only advantages for the international security in achieving further progress in nuclear disarmament. The goal of a world free from nuclear armaments continuous to be our priority. The positive results of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) process, the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) model protocol should not be the last international events in this process. Work on a convention banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons should continue, and extra efforts should be made to narrow the gap between the present positions of nuclear Powers and those of some non-

nuclear States. Everybody will benefit from such a peace effort, and we hope that the present stalemate will be ended. We hope also that the problem of the expansion of the Conference on Disarmament will be resolved, along with differences concerning whether we are going to have a fourth special session of the General Assembly on disarmament.

For many countries, including mine, the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones is a very important undertaking. A more positive attitude towards this effort on the part of some Member States would help the overall process of nuclear disarmament, as well as efforts under the NPT.

The entry into force this year of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction was a highlight of the effort to eliminate weapons of mass destruction. We should now strive for the implementation of that most important Convention. At the same time, we should insist on the effective implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, and on the need to establish an affective verification mechanism for its implementation.

In this Committee, my delegation traditionally attaches the greatest importance to international measures — those of the United Nations in particular — with respect to international control of the production, stockpiling and trade of conventional weapons. We are in favour of strengthening international cooperation in this field and of making it more intensive and better organized than it is at present. It is important that each country should have enough weapons for its national defence. But to have much more than what is considered reasonable could become a security concern for other countries, in particular the neighbouring ones, and that, as we all know, could generate an arms race. We are in favour of an international instrument on the limitation of conventional weapons. Perhaps the Conference on Disarmament could, as a start, prepare a model regional instrument on the limitation of conventional weapons, based on the experience of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, which is expected to be modernized on the basis of the decision taken in July this year by the OSCE. One aspect which should be appropriately dealt with is the question of illicit trafficking in these weapons. We have to admit that the international and regional measures that have been undertaken so far have not been as successful as desired. The problem is very acute in the Balkans, and this is a very important reason why my delegation is in favour of concluding an international instrument and adopting concrete measures against this phenomenon.

I am sure that members of the Committee are aware of my delegation's continuous support for all international activities aimed at banning the production and use of anti-personnel landmines. We support the Ottawa process and we associate ourselves with the position that it is urgent for the international community to finalize, at Ottawa in December, what was agreed upon at Oslo. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the delegations of Canada and of Norway on their continuous efforts to exhort the international community to adopt international instruments to ban the production and use of anti-personal landmines.

I would like to use this opportunity to stress a few things with regard to the future work of the First Committee on questions concerning international security and disarmament. I think it is correct to say that no State Member of the United Nations is as adequately involved in these deliberations as it would like to be. There are many reasons for this. One is that political agenda items and questions of disarmament are discussed in too many United Nations forums, as well as in many other governmental and non-governmental international organizations and forums. For many delegations, it is difficult to play a credible part in all these numerous deliberations, so rationalization and avoiding duplication of work are necessary. We appreciate the Secretary-General's endeavour in his reform agenda to strengthen the Secretariat departments dealing with disarmament and political affairs. It is, however, correct to say that so far we have not had before us innovative proposals or suggestions on how to overcome this problem, which is very important to many delegations. There is a need to enhance the participation — and I underline "participation" — of all Member States in the consideration of disarmament and international security affairs.

In our opinion, one way to solve this problem would be for the First Committee to meet at resumed sessions all the year round, as the Fifth Committee does. For many delegations that would be a better way to participate credibly than to follow and take part in various subsidiary bodies, ad hoc groups, expert meetings and so on. From this point of view, the enlargement of the Conference on Disarmament should be seen as a very important matter.

In the view of many delegations, including my own, the time has come to consider whether it is advisable to merge the First Committee with the Special Political and

Decolonization Committee — the Fourth Committee. For many delegations that would be a better arrangement. Every year we conclude that the agenda of our Committee is overloaded with disarmament items, while many items concerning the maintenance of international peace and security are discussed in the plenary. It is necessary, in our view, to consider the advisability of some of them being allocated to this Committee.

We hope that our work this year will be interesting and even more productive than that of the fifty-first session. The delegation of the Republic of Macedonia will act in that direction.

Mr. Sukayri (Jordan): On behalf of my delegation, may I at the outset congratulate you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau on your election. I am confident that under your chairmanship this Committee will be able to carry out its mandate most efficiently. I wish you all every success and assure you of my delegation's full cooperation.

May I also recognize Mr. Davinic, the Director of the Centre for Disarmament Affairs, and Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung, the Secretary of the Committee, whose expertise has over the years been indispensable for the work of the Committee.

The First Committee convenes this year against the backdrop of some remarkable developments in the fields of international security, arms control and disarmament. The two leading nuclear Powers are in agreement to pursue talks on a START III treaty as soon as START II has been ratified by the Russian Parliament. Such an ambitious endeavour should undoubtedly bring American and Russian nuclear arsenals well below their cold war levels.

Furthermore, the positive outcome of the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the Year 2000 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which was held at Headquarters last April, indicates that the review process is proceeding in line with the Decision on Principles and Objectives of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference.

In the area of banning nuclear tests, the number of signatories to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has reached 140, and seven State Parties have so far ratified the Treaty.

In the sphere of nuclear-weapon-free zones, substantial progress is generally being achieved. In addition to the ongoing consolidation of the existing zones — created by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok — some fresh ideas on creating new ones in areas such as Central and Eastern Europe and the whole southern hemisphere are emerging and gaining momentum.

As to the other weapons of mass destruction, the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) has finally entered into force, as of April 29 of this year. The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) is being reinforced through efforts geared towards the creation of a verification mechanism to render the convention more internationally effective and verifiable.

On the anti-personnel landmines front, the Ottawa process recently achieved remarkable progress by the adoption of a draft text of a treaty aimed at ridding the world, once and for all, of one of the most inhumane and widely deplorable conventional arms.

Nevertheless, in spite of this overall bright picture of the international arms control environment, much is still lacking, and sincere and relentless efforts should be made, geared towards more concrete achievements. In the nuclear disarmament arena, for instance, we find that little, if anything, has been done to commence serious multilateral negotiations aimed at the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We believe that, on an equal footing with efforts concerning the other two weapons of mass destruction — chemical and biological — efforts should now be geared towards a treaty banning the production, development, stockpiling, transfer, deployment and use of nuclear weapons.

In order to pave the way for such a treaty, to go with the considerable step achieved through the conclusion of the CTBT a total ban on the production of fissile material, a cut-off treaty, is now an immediate need. Jordan shares the disappointment expressed by many Member States on the failure of the Conference on Disarmament, again this year, to set up an ad hoc committee with a clear mandate to negotiate a comprehensive agreement banning the production of fissile material for weapons use. Modest as it is, such a step, if realized, would only generate enough momentum for further progress towards the ultimate objective of eliminating nuclear weapons altogether.

As the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) draws near, we should not fail to note with much concern the unique, and even odd, situation currently prevailing in the security arena of the Middle East. All States in the region except

Israel are now parties to the NPT. The one State that defiantly monopolizes nuclear capabilities in the region has so far refrained from acceding to the Treaty or even declaring any intention to do so in the future. The considerable nuclear facilities operated by Israel are still unsafeguarded, and this undoubtedly poses a grave threat to the security of all States in the region as well as to the ongoing peace process.

My country, Jordan, which has concluded a peace treaty with Israel, and taken many steps in good faith towards achieving a durable and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, wishes to take this opportunity to call sincerely upon Israel, the only State in the region — and one of very few in the whole world — still outside the NPT, to accede to the Treaty and place its nuclear facilities under the full-scope safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). This should be done in compliance with all the relevant General Assembly resolutions over the last two decades, as well as with the resolution on the Middle East which was adopted by consensus by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference.

I would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate the announcement made in the General Assembly earlier this month by Mr. Fayez Tarawneh, Jordan's Foreign Minister, that the Government of Jordan has decided to accede to the Chemical Weapons Convention. A Royal Decree to this effect has been issued, and instruments of accession will soon be communicated to the United Nations in its capacity as depositary of the Treaty. By this step, Jordan has complemented its adherence to all three major Treaties on weapons of mass destruction: the NPT, the CWC and the BWC. Such an endeavour has come as a further confirmation of our long-cherished belief in Jordan that none of the weapons of mass destruction, or any other weapons, can create security. Only confidence among regional States can achieve that goal.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones, as an instrument of promoting nuclear non-proliferation as well as a confidence-building measure, have proved to be most effective. Since 1980, the resolution on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East has regularly been adopted by consensus. Intensive efforts are currently being exerted among members of the League of Arab States to reach agreement on a draft treaty creating a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction in the region. We hope that all concerned parties, including the nuclear-weapon States, will spare no effort towards the achievement of this goal. It is worth noting here that both the decision on principles and objectives and the resolution on the Middle East of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference emphasized the importance of such a step.

In conclusion, I would like briefly to tackle a few other issues of concern to this Committee. One cannot deal with the NPT question without putting further emphasis on the importance of such a vital issue as security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States. Utmost attention should be given to this question in the NPT review process in the hope that reaching an international legally binding instrument on security assurances will become attainable.

As far as transparency in the conventional weapons sphere is concerned, Jordan is of the view that unless the scope of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is broadened to encompass military holdings and procurement through national production, as well as stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction, effective operation of the Register cannot be expected in the near future.

We share the disappointment expressed by many Member States on the failure of the Disarmament Commission during its last session to reach agreement on convening in 1999 the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We believe it has become imperative that we agree during this current General Assembly session on a specific date for the special session.

Finally, as the question of United Nations reform gathers further momentum, we find the Secretary-General's proposals in the field of disarmament, particularly that of replacing the Centre for Disarmament Affairs with a Department headed by an Under-Secretary-General, of vital importance. They require serious consideration and in-depth study, and concrete steps should be taken towards their realization.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): On behalf of the States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of this Committee. You and other members of the Bureau can be assured of the full support of our delegations as we address the important issues of disarmament and peace and security that are before the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. We also wish to pay tribute to the work of your distinguished predecessor, Mr. Sychou of Belarus.

Our delegations have been encouraged by recent developments in the field of disarmament. The entry into

force of the Chemical Weapons Convention this year and the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) last year represent important bases for progress in the effort to rid our world of weapons of mass destruction. We are also pleased to note that the movement to ban anti-personnel landmines is at a decisive stage and has attracted the support of a large number of Member States and civil society.

While these developments are not in themselves sufficient to dispel our anxieties about the safety of our planet from the threat of weapons of mass destruction, we should seize the moment and take concrete steps to consolidate the limited gains that have been realized, and move to resolve the outstanding disagreements which have stalled initiatives to find lasting solutions to fundamental disarmament issues. It is the hope of our delegations that ways will be found in this session to take practical steps to deal with some of the pressing issues before us.

The issue of full and verifiable nuclear disarmament is of importance to all States, regardless of their size or military or economic status. Simply put, the implications of nuclear catastrophe are troubling to all States because of the capacity for global annihilation that the arsenals of nuclear weapons represent.

Our delegations therefore call on nuclear-weapon States to respond to the unqualified desire of the overwhelming majority of States for prompt and effective measures to pursue the goal of full and verifiable nuclear disarmament, in a time-bound framework, as a matter of urgency. We wish in this connection to take note of the report of the outcome of the United States and the Russian Federation summit meeting in Helsinki in March of this year at which the parties addressed, *inter alia*, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the parameters for the future reduction of nuclear forces. We hope that the nuclear-weapon States will redouble their efforts to reduce the arsenals of weapons they possess, that those who have not done so will ratify outstanding agreements and that all will pursue further agreements as a matter of urgency, in cooperation with other States.

It is also our hope that the dialogue on the question of a ban on the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons production will see progress at this session of the General Assembly. Continued failure to demonstrate a commitment to stop producing or stockpiling ingredients for nuclear weapons production undermines the promise of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the CTBT. We therefore regret that the Conference on Disarmament was unable to address this matter effectively at its last session.

Indeed, we are concerned that the Conference, which is the sole multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament matters, has not fulfilled that role effectively in recent times. While we commend the many initiatives to pursue disarmament goals outside this forum, we must appeal to Member States to restore the strength of the Conference and to work effectively to break the deadlock on so many vital issues to which the international community is demanding serious attention.

In this regard, we wish to thank the President of the Conference for his statement before the Committee today and share his hope that the 1998 session of the Conference will be productive.

Our delegations, all members of the nuclear-weapon-free zone of Latin America and the Caribbean established by the Treaty of Tlatelolco, fully support the efforts of those regions that have yet to establish such zones as we believe that nuclear-weapon-free zones clearly manifest the rejection of nuclear weapons by the majority of Member States.

I also wish to reiterate the concern of CARICOM States at the movement of nuclear waste through the waters of our region. The peoples of our region have voiced their concern at the dangers posed by the movement of ultra-hazardous wastes through the region with its vulnerable ecosystem, and we wish to call on all States to take the views of the region on this matter into full account.

An issue of deep concern to member States is the proliferation of small arms and the increasing effect of this on the exacerbation of conflicts, and acts of crime and violence which threaten the security and well-being of many States. The gravity of the situation is reflected in the report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms which was submitted to the Assembly by the Secretary-General in document A/52/298.

In this regard we wish to thank the Chairman of the Panel, Ambassador Mitsuro Donowaki of Japan, for his excellent presentation of the report to the Committee earlier today and to express our appreciation to him and to the other members of the Panel for their analysis of the problems and their detailed recommendations.

In its report, the Panel reiterated the view expressed in the Secretary-General's "Supplement to an Agenda for

Peace" (A/50/60) that small arms and light weapons are increasingly used as instruments of violence in internal conflicts dealt with by the United Nations. The Panel further observed that the excessive and destabilizing accumulation and transfer of small arms and light weapons is closely related to the increased incidence of internal conflicts and high levels of crime and violence. Our delegations welcome the report and are especially pleased that the Panel conducted far-reaching consultations, and held regional workshops in Pretoria, San Salvador and Kathmandu.

We take special note of the fact that in its comprehensive treatment of the issues before it, the Panel drew attention to the relationship between the illicit trafficking in small arms and the illicit drug trade — issues of great concern to CARICOM States. The report recognized that the accumulation of small arms and light weapons becomes excessive and destabilizing where, *inter alia*, "the use of such weapons manifests itself in armed conflict, in crime, such as arms and drug trafficking...". The report further recognized that the illicit supply of small arms has in some cases occurred because there is no adequate national system of controls on arms production, exports and imports, and that the differences that exist between the legislation and enforcement mechanisms of States for the import and export of weapons, as well as the lack of cooperation in that area, facilitate the circulation and illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons.

We are pleased that within our hemisphere efforts to develop a regional instrument to deal with this threat are well advanced, and it is our hope that an agreement will be reached under the aegis of the Organization of American States in the near future. This effort was recognized and commended to other regions by the Panel in its report.

We feel that the work of the Panel and that of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, reflected in the resolution entitled "firearm regulation for the purpose of crime prevention and public health and safety" adopted by the Economic and Social Council in July 1997, as well as other initiatives at the regional level, are vital elements of what must be a concerted strategy to attack the problem of illicit small arms trafficking in all its aspects, especially the growing linkage between this activity and the illicit production, trafficking, demand and use of illicit drugs. It is therefore our hope that the Panel's recommendations for prevention and reduction measures and its call for the adoption of a proportional and integrated approach to security and development will be fully addressed by the General Assembly.

Our delegations are pleased that the effort to conclude a convention banning anti-personnel landmines is now at a decisive stage. These weapons, with their widely documented inhumane effect on men, women and children, should be eliminated from the military strategies and arsenals of nations as a matter of urgency.

We commend Canada and Norway for the leadership that they have provided on this issue and call upon Member States to give full support to this initiative.

Our delegations feel that the convening of an effective and meaningful fourth special session of the Assembly devoted to disarmament must remain a priority in the disarmament agenda of the United Nations. There should be no debating the efficacy of this move, as it is clear for all to see that there are fundamental and far-reaching issues of disarmament that warrant the most serious attention of Member States. We regret that the Disarmament Commission was not able to make reasonable progress on many of the issues before it, or to achieve consensus on a clear set of objectives for the special session. It is our hope that there will ultimately be agreement on convening a special session in which the subject of nuclear disarmament can be addressed as a matter of priority and due attention given to all weapons of mass destruction as well as conventional weapons, the proliferation of which undermine global peace and security.

Our delegations have taken note of the proposals of the Secretary-General for reform in the area of disarmament. We welcome the initiative of the Secretary-General and further welcome the clarifications presented in document A/52/CRP.3, which indicates that the subject of nuclear disarmament will be accorded the serious attention it deserves while we focus greater attention on conventional weapons. We further hope that the requisite structure in support of the Conference on Disarmament and other disarmament bodies will be maintained, especially given the need for the Conference on Disarmament to be more effective in fulfilling its mandate. We would also hope that the reorganization will take account of any overlapping and duplication in functions in the disarmament field, and we note that this approach has already been applied in the development area.

The CARICOM countries do not possess vast arrays of weapons. We do not possess nor are we interested in possessing weapons of mass destruction or large arsenals of conventional weapons. We are not by these choices isolated from the threat posed by the proliferation of these weapons elsewhere. We therefore call upon all States to commit

themselves to maintaining only the levels of arms necessary for self-defence, to reject weapons of mass destruction and to take steps necessary to eliminate them.

Mr. Mohammed (Ethiopia): Allow me, at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. My delegation is confident that your experience and able guidance will lead to a successful conclusion of the deliberations of this Committee. I also wish to assure you of my delegation's full cooperation and support in the discharge of your responsibilities.

The past few years have witnessed encouraging progress in the field of disarmament. The indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the successful conclusion of the Oslo Conference, with the adoption of the text of a Convention banning anti-personnel landmines, are indeed significant achievements.

Ethiopia is particularly satisfied that the efforts towards banning anti-personnel landmines have, in a relatively short time, culminated in the conclusion of an international agreement to ban these deadly weapons, as foreseen in General Assembly resolution 51/45 S of 10 December 1996. My delegation wishes to take this opportunity to thank those Governments that have played, and continue to play an important leadership role in the efforts to ban anti-personnel landmines.

Ethiopia, as a country seriously affected by the presence of more than 1.5 million landmines scattered in different parts of its territory, fully supported and participated in the Ottawa process. Ethiopia is fully aware that the total ban of landmines is not an end in itself, especially to those parts of the world already affected. The expensive and arduous task of clearing the mines that are taking an enormous human toll and causing great destruction remains the most serious challenge to the international community. My delegation notes that the agreement to ban landmines recognizes the challenges of mine clearance and the need for effective international cooperation in addressing the acute humanitarian and socio-economic problems caused by these weapons. To deal with these challenges, the commitment and political will of all States, in particular those that possess the technological and financial capacity, is indispensable. In this regard, while calling for enhanced international cooperation in mine clearance, as well as in the rehabilitation and reintegration of victims of mines, my delegation wishes to pay tribute to those Governments that have taken steps in this direction and have pledged to intensify their efforts in the future.

The indefinite extension of the NPT, the conclusion of the CTBT and the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in many parts of the world represent welcome steps in the field of nuclear disarmament.

Notwithstanding these positive achievements, nuclear disarmament, in particular the total elimination of nuclear weapons, remains the most urgent and serious challenge to the international community. The proliferation of nuclear weapons remains a real and threatening possibility as long as such weapons of mass destruction exist. It is, therefore, essential to ensure that the existing favourable conditions in international relations are utilized to achieve the ultimate objective of eliminating all nuclear weapons.

The Conference on Disarmament, by virtue of its long experience in organizing disarmament negotiations, should continue to play its role in elaborating a universal strategy to eliminate the threat of nuclear weapons. We regret that in 1997 the Conference on Disarmament failed to agree on any of its substantive agenda issues. However, we are confident that an agreement will be reached at the Conference on Disarmament on issues to be considered at its next session.

We strongly believe that the Conference on Disarmament should agree on the immediate and concurrent commencement at its 1998 session of negotiations on and the early conclusion of: a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons; a multilaterally negotiated, legally binding instrument to guarantee non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons; and a treaty to eliminate nuclear weapons.

Ethiopia believes that transparency and the useful compilation of information on armaments would contribute to regional stability and international security. The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is an important factor in building a climate of trust and confidence between States. We note that since the establishment of the Register the increase in the volume and geographical spread of information provided to it has underscored the keen interest of the world community in promoting greater openness and transparency in conventional arms transfers.

Ethiopia has consistently provided information to the United Nations on this subject. It is our firm belief that every effort should be made to see that the Register

achieves the objectives of full transparency in armaments in a reliable manner. We believe that transparency will give an impetus to pragmatic bilateral and regional confidence-building mechanisms, with regional organizations assuming a role in developing formulas that fit the specific character and situation of various regions. This in turn could enhance confidence between regional countries, and would also guarantee long-term peace and development.

With regard to small arms, Ethiopia is concerned about the increasing illicit trafficking, accumulation and use of such arms in many parts of the world, in particular, in conflict-affected areas. While we agree that small arms by themselves do not cause conflicts, the fact that these arms exacerbate conflicts and create obstacles to efforts aimed at the peaceful resolution of conflicts needs to be emphasized. Illicit trafficking and the use of small arms play a major role in encouraging violence, criminality and terrorism, thereby destabilizing States and entire regions, as seen in some parts of the world.

Ethiopia believes that the question of the illicit trafficking, accumulation and use of small arms needs to be addressed by Governments at all levels, including at the multilateral level. In this connection, we welcome the report (A/52/298) of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms submitted for the consideration of the General Assembly at its current session. It is our view that this report and the recommendations contained therein could serve as a sound basis for further follow-up action by Governments, and the international community as a whole, in addressing the disturbing reality of the illicit proliferation, accumulation and use of small arms.

In spite of the positive developments witnessed over past years, the goal of disarmament in general, and nuclear disarmament in particular remains one of the priority areas requiring effective and enhanced international cooperation. In this context, my delegation wishes to take this opportunity to welcome the measures taken by the Secretary-General as part of his United Nations reform programme to enhance the capacity of the Organization to deal with disarmament matters. It is our sincere hope that these measures, and most notably the creation of the Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation, will provide additional impetus to the efforts of the international community in the field of disarmament.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): I would like first to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee, and the members of the Bureau. I wish also to assure you of my delegation's support and cooperation during your term in office.

My delegation feels ambivalent about recent international developments in the areas of collective security and disarmament. While there can be no doubt that we have made significant progress, and even achieved some breakthroughs, in the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, it must be recognized that, because of deep-rooted suspicions and selfishness, numerous obstacles remain on the road to disarmament.

Despite our ambivalence, nothing could make us lose sight of the important progress made in the last five years, which far surpasses that accomplished during the preceding 50 years. We owe this success to the commitment and political will of the great majority of Member States of the United Nations in the fight to reduce and eradicate weapons of mass destruction. Thanks to a new universal awareness, numerous agreements and conventions on disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation have been concluded, opening the way to a world without weapons of mass destruction. In this respect, the facts speak for themselves, and I would like to mention some.

First, a year after it was signed by more than 140 countries, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty must be considered a major step towards global control of nuclear weapons, despite its limits and weaknesses. We urge those States still hesitant to do so to sign the Treaty in order to accelerate its entry into force.

Secondly, the entry into force in April 1997 of the Chemical Weapons Convention was another event of great significance. Its universality has yet to be achieved, however, especially since two States Parties — far from insignificant — have not yet ratified it.

Thirdly, the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in the year 2000, held here in New York last April, took place under good conditions. This session gave the Treaty the status of the keystone of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, since today 186 States are Parties to the Treaty.

Fourthly, at the recent Tashkent Conference the countries of Central Asia expressed their desire to create, in the near future, a nuclear-weapon-free zone in that region. This would supplement and strengthen the existing

zones in Latin America, Africa, the South Pacific and South-East Asia.

However, we must not lose sight of the fact that despite this significant progress we still have a long way to go to achieve the ideal of general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

Many previous speakers have asked what follow-up should be given to the momentum we have created in the last five years. In this respect, I would like to emphasize, and deplore, the uncertain current situation of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, which has been bogged down since the opening of its last session with sterile considerations that have little to do with its solid reputation for effectiveness. The spirit of consensus which has always guided it seems to have been eclipsed by suspicions that cause the slightest proposal made by a country or group of countries to be questioned immediately.

Conventional weapons continue to cause much suffering throughout the world. My country, Senegal, feels that, apart from the potential for destruction presented by nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, security problems are equally linked to conventional armaments in numerous conflicts and tensions raging throughout the world, especially in Africa.

We must pay special, sustained attention to the proliferation of light weapons and small arms, which not only threaten the security and stability of African States, but are major obstacles to the building and consolidation of the democratic process, without which no economic and social development is conceivable on our continent.

That is why Senegal shares the view of many African countries that absolute priority must be given to strategies and policies to fight the proliferation of these conventional arms, and to eliminate their sale and traffic in them, especially in conflict zones.

In this context, I particularly welcome the publication of the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, contained in the annex to document A/52/316, which suggests to the international community some ways in which the dissemination of such weapons can be reduced.

At the same time, I would like to pay tribute to the efforts of Member States to draft a trustworthy United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. Undoubtedly, this Register will be a very useful and important tool in the quest for transparency, without which there can be no confidence in international relations in such a sensitive area.

On 18 September this year, the Oslo Diplomatic Conference adopted the text of a Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. This Convention is the outcome of Canada's laudable initiative to ban from our planet these devastating weapons, a true scourge of our time. It also establishes new, binding, international norms leading towards the complete elimination of anti-personnel mines.

Senegal, a participant in the Ottawa process, welcomes the conclusion of this Convention, and will join in the efforts to invite all United Nations Member States to sign the Convention, so that it can enter into force as quickly as possible.

Here, I must, on behalf of my country, address my sincere congratulations to Ms. Jody Williams, Coordinator of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, the recent recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize.

Senegal, a member of the Conference on Disarmament, places a high priority on the achievement of our common goal of eliminating weapons of mass destruction and limit the proliferation of conventional weapons.

As a country known for its spirit of peace and harmony, a signatory of every treaty and convention concluded in the field of disarmament, my country has always advocated switching the immense wealth currently wasted by the arms race to operations for sustainable development. The development of nations through the dividends derived from disarmament should, at the dawn of the next millennium, guide our collective action if we wish to build a world of peace and progress.

The Chairman: I remind delegations that 29 October is the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions on all disarmament and international security agenda items. To facilitate the Committee's work, I would appeal to all delegations to submit draft resolutions as early as possible, particularly those draft resolutions with financial implications and those that will not require extensive consultation. This will enable the Secretariat to process the draft resolutions in time for the Committee's consideration.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.